HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

HUMA • NUMBER 103 • 1st SESSION • 42nd PARLIAMENT

EVIDENCE

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

Chair

Mr. Bryan May

Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Wednesday, May 9, 2018

● (1550)

[*English*]

The Chair (Mr. Bryan May (Cambridge, Lib.)): Good afternoon, everybody. I apologize for the late start here, so we're going to get going without too much preamble.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2) and the motion adopted by the committee on Thursday, November 9, 2017, the committee is resuming its study of experiential learning and pathways to employment for Canadian youth.

Today the committee will hear from witnesses on the subject of co-operative education and programs. I promise my bias to the University of Waterloo will not come through too much.

We have with us today, Norah McRae, executive director of the co-operative education program and career services at the University of Victoria coming to us via video conference from Victoria, B.C. I understand you may have a new role—is that public?

Dr. Norah McRae (Executive Director, University of Victoria, Co-operative Education Program and Career Services): Yes, it is public. It's not starting until September though.

The Chair: Maybe we can hear about that in a little while.

From the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, we welcome Patrick Snider, director of skills and immigration policy.

From Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada, we have Kristine Dawson, president-elect, and Anne-Marie Fannon, past president.

From Mitacs, we have Gail Bowkett, director of innovation policy.

From the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education at the University of Waterloo, we have Judene Pretti.

Welcome to all of you. We are going to get right into opening statements.

First up is Ms. McRae. The next seven minutes are all yours.

Dr. Norah McRae: Thank you very much.

As noted, my name is Dr. Norah McRae, and I am the executive director of the co-operative education program and career services at the University of Victoria in beautiful Victoria, B.C.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a brief to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities as a contribution to the study on the way in which experiential learning can guide younger Canadians through the transitions between high school, post-secondary, and the labour market.

This brief will focus on curricular work-integrated learning, a form of experiential learning, and the role it plays in supporting the transition of post-secondary students into the labour market.

Work-integrated learning, or WIL, is a model of education that prepares students with the required 21st century skills to succeed in the workforce, and bridges their transition to employment, setting them up for lifelong learning. This educational framework is practised in a variety of forms across the globe, but regardless of the structure or operational details of the program, certain key aspects are common: the authentic and productive nature of the experience and engagement with the workplace; curricular integration of workplace learning and academic learning; student outcomes that lead to employability; and meaningful transformative reflection. Co-operative education, internships, community service learning, applied research, work experiences, apprenticeships, entrepreneurship, clinics, practicums and clinical placements, and field placements are all models of curricular WIL.

In 2016, the United Nations launched 17 sustainable development goals to address and end injustice and inequality around the world in all countries, including Canada. SDG number four is to ensure inclusive and quality education for all, and promote lifelong learning, and can be accomplished through the development of work-integrated learning that addresses the challenges of youth unemployment or underemployment, job loss due to the changing nature of work, and inequitable access to education.

Research indicates that WIL is considered a powerful mechanism for developing employability skills in students. Students transition from post-secondary to workplaces more readily, and employers prefer students graduating from WIL programs. These employability outcomes point to a model of education that creates strong returns on public investment in education and that leads to lower youth unemployment and underemployment.

In the case of WIL that is paid—for example, co-operative education—post-secondary education becomes more affordable as the burden of tuition is ameliorated by salaries earned during the WIL experience. For example, across Canada there were over 70,000 co-op work terms last year, each one earning on average $10,000 per term. This amounts to over $700 million in earned co-op student salaries last year.

Students who participate in work-integrated learning have the opportunity to develop learner agency and autonomy through WIL, which helps students understand their personal strengths and weaknesses in the workplace and beyond. Early exposure to community and industry can help students refine their interests and passions, make informed decisions about study direction and career aims, develop their own professional identity, and develop a professional network of contacts before they graduate from post-secondary education. International WIL experiences that allow for the development of intercultural capabilities and broader world views enhance the competitiveness of Canadian graduates on the global stage. These aspects of WIL help provide students with the capabilities required to adapt to an unpredictable, rapidly changing 21st century future.

The Association of American Colleges & Universities advocates for the integration of high-impact practices such as WIL into the student learning experience. The inclusion of these high-impact practices into student education provides opportunities for historically underserved students to access post-secondary education and increases both student retention and engagement.

As an example, the University of Victoria has a number of WIL programs that work with indigenous students. The LE,NONET program provides indigenous students with community or research internships, and the indigenous co-op program provides indigenous students with support in finding work terms, including those within indigenous communities.

In summary, WIL has many benefits to the academic institution, industry, and students and addresses youth unemployment and underemployment, job losses due to the changing nature of work, and inequitable access to education.

This brief provides a recommendation to the standing committee on ways to provide support and guidance to academic institutions and industry stakeholders to further develop quality WIL programs. There is a need for the following: one, curriculum for students, employers, and practitioners that can be a resource for WIL programs across Canada; two, a Canadian quality assurance framework; and three, innovative assessment of learning outcomes and longitudinal research to understand the impact of WIL on student employability, workplace productivity and innovation, and the ability for students to be the leaders for the future in creating a better world.

● (1555)

While there is evidence that WIL can help to combat youth unemployment and underemployment, more work needs to be done to develop new curriculum and experiences that can better prepare all Canadian WIL graduates with the skills, knowledge, and abilities to adapt to and flourish in global and diverse workplaces. Developing new and innovative WIL curriculum is critical, as a new cohort of students, generation Z, has recently begun entering post-secondary institutions.

Generation Z is the first to have experienced childhood with ready access to digital and Internet technology. The way they learn in the classroom and engage in the workplace is unique compared to previous generations due to their technological proficiency. As such, WIL pedagogy needs to adapt to the shifting needs of students immersed in a technology-based world, as well as the changing needs of the 21st century workplace.

In Canada, we are unique in the world in having an accreditation process for co-operative education. This accreditation, administered through CEWIL Canada, has established a set of quality standards and a quality assurance process for co-operative education programs across the country. As WIL grows, there is a need to establish quality and rigour in programs to ensure desired outcomes. Developing a Canadian quality assurance framework for all forms of WIL is essential and would continue our global reputation of excellence in WIL.

Supporting these recommendations will allow the Canadian community of WIL educators, practitioners, employers, and researchers to make significant strides in building and innovating effective WIL programs. Lasting impact will be realized with educational institutions, students, our graduates, and workplaces across Canada and will benefit Canadian society as a whole.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Also, thank you for staying under time. That was great.

We're going now to Patrick Snider, director of skills and immigration policy, at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

Mr. Patrick Snider (Director, Skills and Immigration Policy, Canadian Chamber of Commerce): Mr. Chair, vice-chairs, and committee members, I appreciate the chance to speak to the human resources, skills and social development committee on the issue of work-integrated learning.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce and our members are passionate supporters of work-integrated learning and skills development. The future development of the workforce is a major subject of study and a top priority for us. Highly skilled human resources are a driver of business growth and a pillar of Canadian competitiveness. First I will provide a little background on our organization.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce is committed to increasing prosperity throughout Canada. We envision a Canada where anyone can start and grow their own business in a competitive and successful economy.

We are a strictly non-partisan organization. Regardless of who is in office, we want to see a Canada that succeeds. Much like political parties themselves, our support comes from the grassroots. We draw our strength from 450 chambers of commerce and boards of trade that represent over 200,000 businesses of every size and in every sector in every region of Canada.

Our members have repeatedly told us that skills gaps and the challenge of finding the right workers are some of the biggest issues they face. Work-integrated learning is crucial for bridging those gaps and connecting talented young Canadians to long-lasting, high-quality careers.

That is one reason we published the report, "Skills for an Automated Future", earlier this year, which examines the question of skills development and changing workplaces. It looks at Canada's changing labour market and offers a number of recommendations for connecting Canadians with jobs.

Our report is based on the best current data, informed by the experiences of employers, educators, and students themselves, which we heard through a series of round table discussions across the country.

We heard unanimous support for students getting high-quality, paid work experience related to their educational programs. Work-integrated learning is key to developing the kinds of skills that will be necessary in the future economy.

Things like professionalism, personal initiative, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship are all skills that are developed on the job. These durable skills will continue to be relevant no matter what technology is adopted or what changes occur to the labour market or our businesses.

Businesses see the value of taking on students for work experience. It supports the hiring process by giving employers and students the chance to test drive positions and people and find the best fit. It is associated with productivity gains and a strong fit between employees and their positions.

Furthermore, the recent meeting of B7 representatives affirmed the importance of the role of business in workforce development. Important roles like supporting inclusive growth, co-ordinating with educators to promote skills that are in demand, and promoting work-integrated learning and workforce retraining opportunities have all been affirmed by not only the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, but our partners throughout the G7 countries around the world.

Many companies are able to successfully participate in work-integrated learning programs. We have heard many examples of success stories in our conversations—large companies from Ottawa to Vancouver and everywhere in-between. However, demand for these positions continues to exceed the ability of employers to provide them in the numbers that they are required.

Government must remember that the vast majority of businesses in Canada are small and medium enterprises that may not have the same resources as our large companies to provide WIL opportunities. Many lack dedicated human resources professionals to be able to apply for the funding and navigate higher education partnerships, or the financial resources to provide temporary employment to learners.

These companies would benefit greatly from the talent, energy, and support of learners. They would also be able to provide a wide range of experiences by giving the perspective of a smaller enterprise. If we want youth to learn entrepreneurship, then there is no better place for them than working with entrepreneurs.

There is a role for government to create incentives supporting paid work-integrated learning positions. Especially for small and medium enterprises, support needs to be accessible and targeted.

Existing programs such as the Canada summer jobs program are important; however, barriers like inflexible timelines for applications or limits on the age of participants can prevent students from making full use of these programs. Streamlining applications, creating more flexible timelines, and offering support to a wider range of students would improve access to these positions.

At the same time, information needs to be gathered and disseminated more effectively. The pathways between education and employment are less obvious today than they have been previously. Data needs to be gathered in more detail to guide students between their educational programs and gainful employment. Many industries are clamouring for workers and particular skills, but students lack reliable information on what those are and how to join them.

We support a move towards more detailed labour market information. Businesses and students require a system that looks at the supply and demand of skills and competencies more broadly, rather than formal qualifications alone.

● (1600)

Last, we would like to remind the committee that work-integrated learning is a competitive advantage for attracting international talent to Canada. We are in a global race to attract the world's best and brightest. Ensuring that students who come to Canada can participate in work-integrated learning will help maintain our position as a hub of ideas and innovation. This can be supported in a number of specific ways.

Allowing international students to be eligible for programs such as the Canada summer jobs program would help students and businesses. Ensuring that student work permits allow international students to participate in co-op terms without obtaining a separate work permit would also help streamline participation. Last, counting time spent in Canada for studies towards citizenship eligibility would speed the process of transitioning to permanent residency.

Those are just a few examples of steps that could help better align work and study in Canada for global talent. We hope that you will take these recommendations into account as you make your report.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak.

● (1605)

The Chair: Thank you, sir.

Now, from Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada, we have Kristine Dawson, president-elect, and Anne-Marie Fannon, past president.

Welcome to both of you.

Ms. Anne-Marie Fannon (Past President, Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada):

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair and honourable committee members, for the opportunity to speak about our association, Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada. My name is Anne-Marie Fannon, and I'm past president. I will share my time with my colleague Kristine Dawson, president elect.

CEWIL Canada represents over 90 post-secondary institutions, universities, colleges, and polytechnics located in every province in the country. Our expertise lies in connecting students to industry and community partners, ensuring quality experiences for all stakeholders. As practitioners, we see on a daily basis the tangible benefits for students who engage in work-integrated learning. They gain real-world experience, develop important transferable skills, build their professional network, develop career clarity, and, in many instances, earn critical income to support their education.

Our employer partners gain access to flexible, cost-effective, student employees, and to a high-quality talent pipeline. Studies done in the U.S. show that student hires make the best source of incoming talent. Former interns receive higher performance appraisals, are promoted faster, and stay longer. When delivered as a true partnership among the student, post-secondary institution, and employer, work-integrated learning is simply win-win-win.

For the past 45 years, our volunteer-driven association has worked to transcend provincial boundaries and have impact at the national level. As Norah mentioned, in 1979, we established an accreditation service which set the standards for post-secondary co-operative education programming in Canada. In addition to setting quality parameters, this led to the establishment of a national definition of "co-op", which requires, among other attributes, that all work terms in Canada be paid.

CEWIL recently launched a bilingual, national statistics database to collect information on the number of co-op work terms in Canada, including details on location, employer, and salary paid to the student. While we are still working toward 100% reporting from our members, the initial data we've collected on over 112,000 co-op work terms is very promising.

Last year, CEWIL expanded its mandate from co-operative education to all forms of work-integrated learning. With our expanded mandate, we aim to build capacity for Canadian practitioners, creating more pathways to employment for Canada's youth, and establishing national quality standards for all forms of WIL.

In February of this year, CEWIL brought together key stakeholders to engage in a conversation on the future of WIL in Canada. Our event had a broad spectrum of participants, including six ministries of advanced education, the Public Service Commission, StatsCan, ESDC, Universities Canada, CICan, polytechnics, Mitacs, and industry representatives from all of the student work-integrated learning program partners. During that meeting, we explored ways to support the growth of WIL at the national level, including developing common language, data collection, and establishing a national strategy for work-integrated learning. We will continue this work with a second national conversation in Montreal on August 2.

Forty years ago, CEWIL members met with representatives from the federal government to advocate that any federal funds dedicated to co-operative education programming be done with quality and sustainability in mind. We are here to echo that message today. We applaud the federal government's investments in work-integrated learning and encourage further investments that have impact at the system level. While education falls under provincial jurisdiction, the federal government can and should play a role in supporting initiatives that will help build capacity at the national level and better prepare Canada's youth to compete on the global stage.

I will now ask Kristine to share some of our recommendations.

Ms. Kristine Dawson (President-Elect, Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada): Thank you, Anne.

I would like to highlight a few key elements of the brief submitted by CEWIL Canada to this committee. Our engaged practitioner-members are dedicated to supporting the school-to-work transition and can provide valuable consultation to both this committee and future federal initiatives.

Federal government support is critically required for the creation of a cohesive national strategy to address challenges, identify opportunities, and focus on outcomes associated with WIL. CEWIL is ideally positioned to bring together and facilitate collaboration with a variety of interested stakeholders to strengthen work-integrated and experiential learning across the nation. In 2015, Australia created a national strategy for WIL involving its federal government, business council, chamber of commerce, and post-secondary associations. This is a model that Canada should explore.

Concurrently, Canada needs to build infrastructure to better understand, operationalize, and assess the impact of WIL programs at a national level. Specifically, CEWIL recommends that the government fund the expansion of the the national co-op statistics database to include participation rates in other forms of WIL such as internships and practicums.

CEWIL endorses the student work-integrated learning program operated by ESDC and sees it as an important step towards increasing WIL participation across STEM and business sectors. However, we recommend that the program also provide funding subsidies for not-for-profit organizations and public sector industries, particularly health care and community organizations where WIL opportunities for students are often unpaid. By extending SWILP wage subsidies to the public and not-for-profit sectors, the federal government has the opportunity to introduce systemic change within these industries, encouraging and fostering a culture of paid employment for student workers, as well as providing increased support for indigenous students and students with disabilities, who are disproportionately enrolled in programs that are currently excluded from funding.

While SWILP funds 16-week work terms, one of the challenges of the current design of the Canada summer jobs program is that many positions are only funded for eight weeks, which is not enough time to meet co-op work term credit requirements. It also leaves many students in the arts and humanities, or those who want to engage in community organizations or the not-for-profit sector, either working unpaid for the remaining weeks, or scrambling to secure other employment. Funding summer jobs between eight and 16 weeks would offer the flexibility that students need.

● (1610)

Finally, CEWIL also encourages the government to extend funding support to include a demographic group critical to Canada's economic success, international students. According to the Canadian Bureau for International Education, 51% of international students plan on applying for permanent residence in Canada. Extending funding eligibility to this group would increase their chances of gaining valuable Canadian work experience leading to permanent residency and ultimately their ability to successfully transition into the Canadian workforce driving innovation and prosperity.

Again, thank you for this opportunity. Our membership believes that collectively we can work together to build partnerships for the betterment of Canadian youth.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now from Mitacs we have Gail Bowkett, director of innovation policy.

Ms. Gail Bowkett (Director, Innovation Policy, Mitacs): Thank you, Mr. Chair, vice-chairs, and all the members of the committee, first of all for leading this study, and for including Mitacs in today's proceedings. It's a real pleasure to be here with all of my colleagues around the table. I think you will find there is a very strong alignment among all of the comments we're here to make today.

I am really pleased to be here representing Mitacs. I hope Mitacs is a name that's familiar to you and that it's an organization you are all familiar with to some degree, but I will give you a quick overview of who we are as an organization and what we do in the interest of providing some context to the points that I want to raise with the committee today.

Mitacs is a national not-for-profit organization. We are based out of the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. For 17 years now we have been providing work-integrated learning experiences primarily to graduate students in the form of scientifically valid research internships with industry partners, complemented by a series of professional development and skills training workshops.

Our programming is inclusive across all disciplines, from the social sciences and humanities to STEM, but we also support multidisciplinary research. We work across a range of industries, both in the private sector and in the not-for-profit sector. We work with companies large and small, and our programming is offered both domestically and internationally.

We have grown from the initial focus on graduate-level students, Ph.D. and master's students and post-docs, to the full spectrum of Canadian post-secondary education. We have very recently opened eligibility to our core program to the college and polytechnic sector. We're very excited to see what projects come out of that. That was launched about two months ago. We're currently looking at expanding to undergraduates, initially in Quebec.

We have also recently begun offering a program of first job placements as a delivery agent of the youth employment strategy of the Government of Canada.

All of our programming is based on the research internship model. We're focused on research, entrepreneurship, and commercialization. We are currently delivering about 6,000 internships per year, and we are on a growth trajectory to reach a target of 10,000 internships per year by the year 2020.

I know the committee has heard from a number of witnesses throughout this study. I have read several of the submissions that have been provided to the committee, and I think a very clear picture has already been painted in terms of the uncertainty of the labour market due to a number of factors. We've heard some of that again today, so I won't repeat those issues again here, but I think there is a very clear understanding that success in the labour market will be increasingly challenging for our young people.

Within this landscape, experiential learning, particularly work-integrated learning, is increasingly important to ensure that young people have the skills they need to transition into the workforce, particularly for graduates of our post-secondary education institutions.

Mitacs is a key player in the Government of Canada's innovation and skills agenda. We have a significant investment from the Government of Canada over five years to support our growth to that target of 10,000 placements per year. We leverage this funding with provincial funding in every province across the country, and we leverage that again with investment from the private sector companies for every internship that they host. All of our internships are paid.

I'm happy to follow up with the committee to provide additional details on Mitacs' programming if that is of interest and would be helpful, but I'll move quickly now to the three simple recommendations that I'd like to put forward to the committee today for consideration.

The first one is that Canada's support to experiential learning be inclusive to all levels of post-secondary education. Much of the discussion around work-integrated learning focuses on the undergraduate level, but let's ensure that we continue to incorporate opportunities for graduate students and post-docs. These are highly trained, highly qualified, highly educated individuals who will be leaders in innovation and in our economy. Providing work-integrated learning experiences to students at this level gives them the chance to test out their skills in real-world situations, explore new career opportunities, and transition into meaningful employment outside of academia.

● (1615)

The second recommendation would be that research internships are recognized as valuable work-integrated learning experiences, both for students and for the industry partners. As such, these are really a strategic tool for Canada.

There are many forms of work-integrated learning, but the research-focused opportunities bring benefit not only to the students but also to the companies that are accessing talent at a time in the lives of those young people when they are making strategic career decisions. The companies are increasing investments in industrial research and development, and they're advancing their own innovation and talent goals. It also helps to improve the absorbative capacity of industry to take on graduate-level students and post-docs.

The third recommendation is around expanding international experiences within experiential learning. International experiences are critical for young Canadians to build global competencies that they will increasingly need in this globalized labour market.

Once again I thank the committee for undertaking this study and doing this deep dive on the crucial role that experiential learning plays in developing work-ready skills in our young post-secondary graduates. These experiences must be inclusive to all levels, leverage the knowledge in research capabilities of our young graduates, and be global in scope. Investments in our young people today are investments in the economic prosperity of our country.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Thank you very much. Now from the University of Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education we have Judene Pretti. The next seven minutes are all yours.

Ms. Judene Pretti (Director, Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education, University of Waterloo): Good afternoon and thank you very much, Mr. Chair and distinguished committee members, for the invitation to appear to talk to you today about the University of Waterloo and its co-operative education program. WATCACE is the short form for the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education.

You've heard from my CEWIL colleagues about the model of co-op, and about its role in supporting students and employers in meaningful education that equips students with the skills and experiences that they need to be successful in their desired pathways following graduation.

In my comments today, I would like to highlight a few unique characteristics of Waterloo's co-op program, as well as the ways that Canada could work toward global leadership in the broader area of work-integrated learning.

One of the most notable aspects of Waterloo's co-op program is its scale, and I will share a few numbers with you.

Between 2007 and 2017, the number of paid, four-month work terms that Waterloo supported grew from 12,900 per year to 21,600 per year. This currently represents about 68% of the undergraduate students across all six faculties at the university. We have 6,900 active employers from more than 60 countries that hire our co-op students. Last year we processed over one million job applications in our system and supported 67,000 in-person, web, and phone interviews. This led to a 97.7% employment rate. The numbers are staggering, but for us at Waterloo, it's not just about quantity. It's also about quality.

The post-graduation employment rate of co-op students at 89% is similar to the provincial average of 88%. However, where co-op students stand out is that 96% of them report that they are employed in positions related to skills they developed during their degree, compared to a provincial average of 74%. Additionally, two years after graduation, 79% of the co-op students report earning more than $50,000 annually, compared to 39% across the province.

That leads me to talk about another notable area of our co-op practice at Waterloo. In 2006, we established WatPD, a mandatory professional development program for our co-op students. WatPD delivers online courses to enhance key or transferable skills, including topics such as communication, teamwork, and intercultural skills. Last year we used the WatPD program and many of the best practices learned in delivering co-op for the past 60 years to build a new, flexible, work-integrated learning certificate known as EDGE. For non-co-op students, EDGE guides them through the process of learning how to identify and articulate the skills that they're developing throughout their undergraduate career.

Also unique to Waterloo is the existence of a research unit focused on co-op. In 2002, the Waterloo Centre for the Advancement of Co-operative Education was established. This is the department that I now lead. Our mandate is to conduct, facilitate, and mobilize research on co-op and other forms of work-integrated learning.

Through our research, we have identified the factors that affect the quality of the work-term experience for students. These factors include whether students felt that the work was relevant to their academic or career interests, whether students had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to the workplace they were in, and whether they had the opportunity to develop and learn new skills.

We have also investigated supervisors' perspectives on co-op, and we found that most view co-op from both an employment and an education perspective; i.e., they view co-op students in the workplace both as learners and as workers. Most recently, we've explored employers' views on talent, their needs for talent, and how many view co-op as a talent pipeline for their organizations.

We have undertaken a number of mobilization activities in WATCACE, including publications in international, peer-reviewed journals. We have a monthly newsletter where practitioners provide their perspectives on work-integrated learning research, and we've recently launched a research portal, a website that links to research related to co-op and other forms of work-integrated learning. We have plans for providing additional resources through the portal and support for a community of practice.

A very interesting aspect of research in co-op and work-integrated learning is the fact that it offers the opportunity for studies in a wide variety of disciplines.

● (1620)

Through my experience in WATCACE, I have had the opportunity to work with researchers studying co-op from fields such as mental health, social psychology, and education. I have also worked with industrial organizational psychologists—indeed, a scientist—in examining the many workplace-related research questions that the co-op work term presents.

With respect to Canada's potential global leadership in work-integrated learning, I see research as a key element. As has been mentioned by my colleagues, there's a great deal that can be learned from Australia, which has mobilized a national strategy around WIL, and has a steady stream of research activity taking place. Globally, there is a strong and growing group of researchers in this field. With support, Canada would be well-situated to lead this community.

We need to encourage more research to be conducted on the various models of work-integrated learning, to better understand and document the impact on students, community and industry partners, as well as the academic institutions. For instance, there is increasing interest in models of WIL that support students exploring their interests as entrepreneurs. Research is needed to better understand this link between WIL and the development of entrepreneurs.

From the employer perspective, research is needed to examine the impact of WIL on organizational effectiveness, particularly as it relates to productivity, innovation, and the global reach of Canadian industry. From the academic institution perspective, we need to better understand the balance between the outcomes of various models of WIL and the associated institutional costs to support those programs.

Building a national strategy to increase awareness, interest, and commitment to research in this area is critical to ensuring that the federal investment in creating and expanding WIL programs achieves its desired results. As well, I strongly believe that a national strategy would represent an opportunity for Canada to be a world leader in the research and practice of work-integrated learning.

Thank you once again, Mr. Chair and distinguished committee members, for the opportunity to speak with you today.

● (1625)

The Chair: Are you sure you don't need any more time? Okay, I'm just checking. I never get tired of hearing those numbers. Thank you.

First up with questions, we have MP Blaney, please.

Hon. Steven Blaney (Bellechasse—Les Etchemins—Lévis, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before entering this committee, we had the Olympic champions in the House of Commons. It seems that now we're with the champions of work-integrated learning.

My first comment is for the analysts. It would be interesting to see how we compare on the international level with our numbers in Canada of post-secondary students embarking on work-integrated learning. From what you've said, global leadership is certainly in terms of research, but are we....

Welcome everyone. It's really encouraging to hear you. Mr. May is a strong advocate of Waterloo University. I graduated from the co-op system at Sherbrooke University, which was actually inspired by Waterloo

[*Translation*]

And so I did my studies in a francophone environment. My nephew is also a Sherbrooke graduate.

[*English*]

I won't tell you the year, though, because it's been a little while.

My question is for the witness in Victoria, Ms. Norah McRae.

Is it difficult to find employers for co-op students?

Dr. Norah McRae: Your question was for me, and the question was whether it's difficult to find employers.

I would think that most co-op programs across the country or work-integrated learning programs would say that an ongoing element of work is to find appropriate employers who would provide the kind of environment that will allow students to learn and grow and develop. However, there have been some recent advancements that have helped significantly, like the student work-integrated learning program, which is the federal funding that provides wage subsidies to employers hiring students. That helps a lot. Any kind of financial incentives that support students, in paying.... We strongly advocate that they should be paid experiences, where possible—not always. Any kind of financial incentives make a big difference.

The gentleman from the Chamber of Commerce spoke very eloquently about the importance of the small-to-medium enterprise sector in this endeavour. Many small-to-medium enterprises would very much like to participate in hiring students, but they don't have the finances and they don't have HR capacity. They have a hard time bringing students on board and supporting them. I think there's a tremendous opportunity here to help build the capacity of small to medium enterprises such that they can engage in WIL more effectively.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Thank you.

As you spoke, I saw a couple of heads nodding. Would you like to add something to this question of whether it is hard to find employers—which it is—but...incentives? Maybe you can elaborate, Ms. Dawson.

Ms. Kristine Dawson: I'm here representing CEWIL Canada, but my day job is as the director of co-op, career, and work-integrated learning at Conestoga College, which is down the street from the University of Waterloo. This has been my field of work for the past 18 years.

What I would say, as a practitioner, is that it can be difficult to find co-op employers. It really can depend on the sector. There are times when demand outstrips the supply of students, and then there are times when supply exceeds demand. Finding that match can be the challenge.

To Norah's point, wage subsidies are of great benefit. In Ontario we have the significant, I think, benefit of being able to access the Ontario co-operative education tax credit, which is also a significant benefit in terms of promoting co-operative education.

● (1630)

To the point made by my colleague Patrick, on-boarding in small businesses is a significant challenge, so they need the HR resources and support. Often in post-secondary institutions we have staff in roles that help, consult, and work with small businesses, helping them develop job descriptions, and that helps to be able to bring on the students.

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Snider.

Mr. Patrick Snider: Thank you.

I'd just like to reiterate some of the points that have been made so far.

Financial support, of course, is very important for small and medium-sized—

Hon. Steven Blaney: Do you mean an incentive from the government in the form of a tax credit for the employers that are hiring co-op students? Is that what you're suggesting?

Mr. Patrick Snider: That kind of support, absolutely. Most important of all, though, is making sure that it's accessible. One of the points that we continue to make is about reducing the administrative burden of applying for things. Programs like the summer jobs, as I mentioned earlier, are excellent and they provide a high degree of support, but sometimes the timelines of the applications required can be more of a challenge.

Hon. Steven Blaney: I'm sorry to cut you off, Mr. Snider, but my time is limited.

Summer jobs are not within a program; therefore, they can be related or not related to your field of experience.

It seems as if it's the best way of learning. Why is it just a small percentage and mostly in the technical fields that we see this kind of approach? Could it be in other areas?

Can you elaborate on why we are just doing it for, let's say, engineers and others in the technical fields?

Ms. Judene Pretti: I would say our experience has been that we started with an engineering program in 1957 and it has expanded to be across all programs, including graduate. The University of Victoria has a high percentage of graduate students participating in co-op, and that's not just in the STEM disciplines.

I think we have experience in the co-op field for those kinds of work terms, and it's just a matter of sharing practices to encourage employers to consider students who are in non-STEM fields.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Long.

Mr. Wayne Long (Saint John—Rothesay, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to our presenters this afternoon. It's very, very interesting.

My background is in small business and I'll get to some of those questions for Mr. Snider in a few minutes.

Lat year our government began rolling out a $73-million investment for the student work-integrated learning program to create 10,000 paid student work placements over the next four years. The intent is to facilitate stronger partnerships between employers and partnering polytechnics, universities, and colleges. In addition, budget 2017 announced $220 million for Mitacs to provide research internships with the goal of creating 10,000 work placements per year. ESDC also committed that more than 400 of the work placements under the student work-integrated learning program would be allocated primarily to post-secondary students from under-represented groups in STEM fields.

Ms. Bowkett, how will these investments in work-integrated learning complement and help bolster existing co-op and work-integrated learning programs?

● (1635)

Ms. Gail Bowkett: Are you asking specifically about the Mitacs model?

Mr. Wayne Long: Yes.

Ms. Gail Bowkett: I think what distinguishes the Mitacs model is the focus on the applied research element of our placements. In many cases work-integrated learning opportunities do not necessarily have that research focus. All the research projects we support go through a peer review process so they are all validated scientifically.

We have a team of people across the country that work with the business partners and the academic institutions to develop a shared goal, a shared interest, around a research project that will serve the innovation needs of the company, but also benefit the student in their own research programming. I think that has been the distinguishing feature.

As I mentioned, we began with a real focus on graduate students. We started initially with Ph.D. students and expanded to post-docs and master's as well. We are looking at that layer within post-secondary institutions. Those are our roots; that's where we began. We see the need for this research focus of work experience right across all levels of PSE institutions, and across all disciplines as well.

Mr. Wayne Long: That's perfect. Thank you for that.

Saint John—Rothesay, my riding, leads the country in child poverty. We have some major generational poverty issues. The 30% overall poverty rate is twice the national average.

In my constituency office we work with young people from low-income households, struggling to transition into the workforce and find well-paying jobs. Do you believe the work-integrated learning program investments adequately target young people from such backgrounds? Is there more we can do to target those from under-represented groups? I want to get a comment from Ms. Dawson and Ms. Fannon, after you, Ms. Bowkett.

Ms. Gail Bowkett: That's an interesting question. Obviously the Mitacs programming is very much focused on people coming through the post-secondary education system. I think beyond those opportunities there are other government programs in place that help to support employment of young people, and maybe we need to consider work-integrated learning experiences before kids get to the point where they're at a university or a college.

That's not an area we are currently operating in. Others may have different experiences or expertise with that, but I think Canada should consider that.

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Dawson and Ms. Fannon, I know you would like to see funding target more non-profits and adequately target under-represented groups. How do you see that flowing out?

Ms. Anne-Marie Fannon: As we mentioned, we have received statistics that indigenous students and students with disabilities are disproportionately enrolled in programs like social sciences and the humanities. Right now with this program being limited to students who are only enrolled in STEM and business industries we're not reaching the broad spectrum of Canadian post-secondary students.

The other thing we're not accounting for is that those arts and humanities students can be working in those STEM and business industries. The question of how we expand beyond STEM co-op students, is one of the things that we speak very specifically about at Waterloo.

My day job is the director of our professional development program at the University of Waterloo, and we have a centralized co-op model, which means that in most instances every student can apply for every position, and it's up to the students to articulate their skill set to the employer and convince the employer that they can do the job. That's much more reflective of the labour market.

We see graduates working in a spectrum of positions that may or may not be directly related to their academic program. When we think about those centralized open accessible models for our students we're helping every Canadian post-secondary student.

Mr. Wayne Long: Thank you.

Thank you, Chair.

The Chair: Now we'll move to MP Sansoucy, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): I thank all of the witnesses. I will have questions for you.

I know we asked you to be patient in the beginning of the meeting. I would ask you to kindly wait a little longer because I need to speak to the committee about another topic. As it is something that affects one Canadian out of two, I think you will agree.

Mr. Chair, I'd like to take a minute to explain to my committee colleagues why I would like us to vote on the motion I tabled concerning employment insurance sickness benefits.

In the beginning of 2016, the minister told us that he would be tabling an in-depth reform of the Employment Insurance Act. After two and a half years, we are still waiting for it, which forces our committee to urgently review various aspects of the Employment Insurance Act. I would prefer that we study it in its entirety, but I think it is important that our committee make recommendations concerning sickness benefits. That aspect of the act has not changed since 1971. But in the intervening 47 years, reality has changed.

As I said earlier, one Canadian out of two will be affected or is affected by cancer. These people are working men and women. One-third of the people who receive sickness benefits will use up all of their 15 weeks of benefits. My colleagues and I see these people in our riding offices. We are faced with people who find themselves without any income after 15 weeks, while they're still undergoing treatments. Not everyone has access to private insurance. It makes no sense whatsoever that the mother of a single-parent family has to go back to work when her doctor tells her she needs to rest after chemotherapy or radiation therapy.

I invite my colleagues to vote in favour of this motion so that we can deal with what is most urgent. I hope that we will conduct a general study on employment insurance rather than going about things piecemeal like this. Six hundred thousand people throughout Canada signed a petition saying that this is important to them. Millions of workers have said how important this is. I think we have to listen to them.

● (1640)

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you.

We have Mr. Long and then Mr. Blaney

Mr. Wayne Long: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move that the debate be now adjourned, please.

The Chair: We have a motion to adjourn debate on this motion.

Would you like a recorded vote?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Yes, please.

[*English*]

The Chair: Okay.

(Motion agreed to: yeas 5; nays 4 [See *Minutes of Proceedings*])

The Chair: Madam Sansoucy, you started that motion with about five minutes and 27 seconds left. Would you wish to use that time for questions?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Yes, indeed. Thank you very much.

I will begin with Mr. Snider. Your organization is very consistent. What you suggested as a recommendation, your organization was already involved in in 2014: that subsidies be granted to employers to allow them to offer work-integrated apprenticeships, and that more research be done by the government on productivity gains related to this type of apprenticeship.

A group of experts on youth employment made several recommendations. That group also found thought it quite important that mentorship be encouraged. In my riding, several employers told me that they wanted to have such a program.

Given your organization's expertise, you suggested that granting such subsidies could encourage the hiring of young people. I'd like to know how we can encourage the success of this program. The group of experts on youth employment recommended that we put together an issue table to create such a program in partnership with enterprises and employers. The organization told us that the government should act quickly so that the program that is put forward meets the expected objectives.

Would that be a good recommendation, in your opinion?

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Snider: I'd say that the recommendation to maintain a round table on feedback and get the input from business as to the results of the program is absolutely still a priority.

One thing that we continually emphasize is to make sure that business is included in the process, and that they are listened to when it comes to the outcomes of these programs. I think that absolutely yes, that's still an area where there is a need to make sure, once these programs are put in place, there is accountability, measurement of outcomes.

● (1645)

To give a few examples, we've seen ESDC do some excellent work lately around the outcomes of educational programs using tax data, using employment records, and using employment insurance records. This kind of use of administrative data can be extremely helpful. Student loan records—all of these things can give very strong data points around the effectiveness of these programs. I think that, moving forward, as these funding models are put into place and more resources are given to different programs for supporting work-integrated learning, these other feedback mechanisms will become extremely important and should be looked at as those are rolled out.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: My second question is for the Mitacs representative.

You referred to 6,000 internships, with 10,000 more to come. These are paid internships, if I understood correctly. In light of your expertise, how much should students who want to acquire professional experience while remaining afloat financially be paid?

As you probably know, the NDP recommends a minimum wage of $15 an hour. That hourly wage would allow students to live decently and to continue their studies.

Can you tell us what hourly wage should be paid to those young people in order to compensate them adequately?

[*English*]

Ms. Gail Bowkett: I can certainly tell you about our financial model and how we cover the salaries of our interns. Our internships are based on a four-month period. We call them internship units, just for the sake of convenience, but a student can do one internship, two internships back to back, or they could come back the next year. We can use those units as building blocks to construct a research project with our industry partner.

For every internship unit, the student will receive $10,000 over that period, as their salary. There is also a little bit of financing that is made available to the institutions to cover some of the actual research costs involved in the projects, because the interns are co-supervised by an academic supervisor and the outside partner, the industry partner.

That's our current financial model.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

My next question is addressed to the university representatives.

According to a Parliamentary Budget Officer study released in 2015, new Canadian university graduates have become increasingly overqualified over the past 25 years, and young people are often overqualified for the requirements of their profession. Is that something you have also observed?

What potential solutions could there be to solve that problem?

On Monday we heard testimony from representatives of Canada's Building Trades Unions. They said they found it unfortunate that the best students are directed to jobs for which they are overqualified. People who come through immigration also greatly value degrees.

Have you observed that as well? How can we fight this situation?

[*English*]

The Chair: We're out of time, but I'll allow for a brief answer, please.

Ms. Anne-Marie Fannon: One of the things that we want to highlight with work-integrated learning is that it really does give the student that opportunity to gain some experience and almost what we would call an entrée into the world of work while they're there.

Many employers indicate they're looking for at least one year of experience, whether it's paid employment or co-curricular activities, and those sorts of things. While we certainly are seeing an increase in credentials across the country, one of the things that work-integrated learning succeeds at is giving students that oftentimes-paid work experience while they are in school so that they have that professional network, they are able to move into positions more easily, and as some of the statistics show, get promoted more quickly.

I'm not sure if there's anything else you want to add.

The Chair: Thank you. Actually, we do have to move on.

MP Fortier, please.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Good afternoon, everyone.

The chair will no doubt be pleased to learn that my husband is a Waterloo graduate and was involved in a co-op program.

I'm from an urban environment and I have little knowledge about the reality of businesses and associations that work in remote rural areas.

How would enterprises or associations participate in co-op programs in remote or rural areas?

To start, I'd like to hear the opinion of the representatives of Co-operative Education and Work-Integrated Learning Canada, Ms. Dawson and Ms. Fannon.

● (1650)

[*English*]

Ms. Kristine Dawson: Sure.

One of the advantages of paid co-op work terms is that because students are earning an income and they're going to work for an extended period of four months, sometimes back to back for 12 months, they will consider relocating for work. That does provide an opportunity to take student talent from the institution they're learning in to other communities.

That's one of the tasks—

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Are there many employers or associations in the communities that are rural or *éloignées* that do ask for those types of programs? What is the participation? Is it high?

Ms. Kristine Dawson: In terms of some statistics, in the Northwest Territories, we have 1,590 work terms reported. That's a significant quantity.

One of the jobs of the staff at our post-secondary institutions is to go out and talk to employers, to promote. Really that's an opportunity to expand the reach, to expand the resources to connect with employers and let them know these students exist.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Fine.

Ms. Bowkett, do you have any comments to add?

[*English*]

Ms. Gail Bowkett: I would quickly add to that. There are institutions in communities, large and small, right across the country and there is a lot of outreach happening in some of those smaller communities. I think part of the beauty of work-integrated learning experiences is that we can take students from institutions and extend that to communities maybe where that institution is located.

As a very quick example, we have a very significant-sized project in Cornwall, Nova Scotia, that is taking close to 100 interns over a period of three or four years. We're definitely seeing interest from those rural and more distanced communities.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Fine. Thank you.

Mr. Snider, does the Canadian Chamber of Commerce know if there are any small and medium enterprises in remote or rural areas, or even enterprises in urban areas, that have expressed a desire to take part in this with co-op students?

[*English*]

Mr. Patrick Snider: I would say you are right that there is a challenge having to do with that both in terms of the size of the businesses that are involved and the distance to institutions of higher learning. We see a number of challenges that face those. It's common to a lot of small and medium-sized businesses.

Awareness is a big one, simply knowing that these programs exist and what kind of commitment is involved. That's one of the things we emphasize. I would say that Waterloo is a gold standard at this. They make sure that they can navigate the process of applying either to funding or to the programs themselves with universities, ensuring that this process is as streamlined as possible to minimize the amount of administrative and regulatory burden on the businesses that want to take on these students.

You're right. There is a challenge there, and there are a number of pathways that can be used to address it in terms of outreach, streamlining the process, and providing the resources to take on students.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Ms. Fannon, in your presentation, you mentioned wanting to do research on the capacity of enterprises to take on co-op program students. Did I understand you correctly? What I understood is that this concerned research on bilingualism. Did you mention that?

[*English*]

Ms. Anne-Marie Fannon: Thank you.

What I was saying is that we have recently established a bilingual national statistics database. We're collecting data on the location, the employer, and the salary of all of the students who participate in co-op work terms in Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Do you also gather data on the language of work in the programs that are offered?

I'm asking the question because organizations like the Fédération de la jeunesse canadienne-française and the Association des collèges et universités de la francophonie canadienne are scouring the country for minority community French-language positions for francophone students.

I'm curious to know if you gather that information.

● (1655)

[*English*]

Ms. Anne-Marie Fannon: That's a great question.

I don't believe we currently do, although we are looking at adding additional fields to our database. That's a great suggestion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Mona Fortier: Excellent.

This was a good exchange, thank you.

[*English*]

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Now we'll go to MP Morrissey, please.

Mr. Robert Morrissey (Egmont, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

I'd like to follow up on previous points you made, Ms. Bowkett.

Regarding the 100 interns in Cornwall, I'm curious as to what was driving that. Could you expand on that a bit more? It's in Cornwall, Nova Scotia. You made a reference to it.

Ms. Gail Bowkett: Yes, that is a project we have with—and of course, now that you have me on the spot I'm blanking on the company's name, it's "something Seaplants"—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Is it Acadian Seaplants?

Ms. Gail Bowkett: It's Acadian Seaplants, yes, thank you very much. They have a research facility based there. We sat down with them and talked about their research program and their research needs, and we put together, basically, what we call a cluster project so that they can have access to interns over a number of years—three or four years, I believe it is.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay, so how would that compare...? Obviously, it's very successful. I know the company well. I know the owners of the company—

Ms. Gail Bowkett: There you go.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: —but I wasn't aware that they were participating at this level.

Briefly, if you could, what were you able to put together that makes this work successfully? I'm interested in the longer duration.

Ms. Gail Bowkett: The internships per se will all continue to be four months in duration. This is an example where we have used them, basically, like Lego blocks. They can have five in one year, or spread five out over two years, or build it all together. I'd have to get back to you with the details on what the actual research out there would be.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Is that unique to that project?

Ms. Gail Bowkett: No, that's the way we've designed our programming. We can have projects that have a single internship, and that's it. We can have projects that have two internships, five, 10. We can really build them and stack them to meet the needs of the industry partner.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Okay.

This question would be generally for anybody who may want to comment. Over the past decade, have you observed any trends? I'll go to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce as well, representing business, but from the academic side have you observed any trends that occur within this scope, that are leading you to do a different analysis now? That's for whomever wants to respond.

Dr. McRae.

Dr. Norah McRae: Yes, or did you want Patrick from the chamber to answer first?

Mr. Robert Morrissey: I want to hear your answer, and then I'd be interested in Patrick's answer.

Dr. Norah McRae: Generally, trends that I have seen are that we have seen a general growth of work-integrated learning programs across the country, so an expansion of different types and an expansion in the number and range of programming. As has been mentioned previously, you'd be hard pressed to not find institutions that have work-integrated learning in a range of different academic disciplines, so it's really not just in the STEM subjects anymore. There is a growth in—

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Has that occurred in the past 10 years?

Dr. Norah McRae: There has been a growth in that, an expansion of the breadth of the kinds of programming.

There's been a growth in the interest in international, both in terms of students going out and international students coming in. All of our institutions have experienced growth in the number of international students on our campuses, and those students are very interested in having work-integrated learning experiences in Canada and elsewhere.

The national average for students studying abroad, according to the Canadian Bureau for International Education, is about 2.5% to 3%. It's about three times that rate for students doing international work-integrated learning because of the connection to career development in an international context and the development of global skills.

In my institution, we're seeing a growth in the engagement of indigenous students in our programming. We're seeing that in some instances, but I wouldn't say it's across the board.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Dr. McRae.

Mr. Snider.

Mr. Patrick Snider: We could identify a number of different trends. If you look, for example, at the discussion around things like the skills gap that employers are citing, I think you've seen a fairly significant change in the nature of that conversation over the last 10 years. Previously you'd hear more of a focus on the lack of particular technical skills, for instance, whereas now I think there's a broader conversation about the demand for a wider range of more professional skills, more adaptability skills. We're starting to see a conversation around things like more general attributes, having a growth mindset, professionalism, resilience, those kinds of things. I think you have seen a change in what people are looking to get out of working and creative learning experiences.

There's certainly a higher appreciation for them across the board. I think more businesses are aware of them, and they're participating in them, although there are still limits on how many are capable. There's a broad agreement that they are increasingly an important part.

Furthermore, you're seeing the participating students coming in with a lot more awareness of the challenges in the job market. I think there's an awareness they are coming into a more competitive market. There's an increase in the acknowledgement that learning isn't a one-time thing, that it's lifelong. You can identify a number of trends that have been increasingly important over time. It depends on which particular example. It's all part of an ongoing conversation lately.

● (1700)

The Chair: That's excellent.

Thank you very much.

Now we'll move to MP Warawa, please.

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley—Aldergrove, CPC): Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses.

Dr. McRae, you highlighted that a new curriculum and experience is critical to the changing needs within the workplace.

My responsibility in this Parliament is to represent Canadian seniors, and right now there are more seniors than there are youth. One in six Canadians is a senior, and within 12 to 13 years it's going to be one in four. There's this major demographic shift within Canada. That brings challenges, but also opportunities. There are opportunities for youth to be involved in geriatrics and home care, huge opportunities for good high-quality jobs. You can advance through different levels of geriatric care and even palliative care positions.

My question has to do with this year's budget. The government acknowledged the aging population, and said that as Canada's population continues to age we need to prepare for the challenges that seniors, especially senior women, face. That's because women live longer. That's why budget 2018 proposes to provide $75 million through the Public Health Agency of Canada to support the healthy seniors pilot project.

Dr. McRae, would you see Victoria, western Canada, as a good location to be considered for a pilot project on how to take care of seniors better? The government has budgeted these dollars and the question is, where would they be best spent? Could you do a one-minute presentation on why Victoria would be a great place to have a pilot project?

Dr. Norah McRae: Of course it would be a great place; it's Victoria, after all. Isn't that the city of the newly wed and the nearly dead? Isn't that the joke about Victoria—present company excluded, of course.

Voices: Oh, oh!

Dr. Norah McRae: I'm sure I could connect you with the people involved at the centre on aging. It's a very significant research centre at the University of Victoria, dealing specifically with these issues on health and wellness for our aging population, and how we can do a better job of meeting this grey tidal wave, I think they call it, so we can have the supports in place and a good quality of life for our seniors. As you rightly pointed out, there are all sorts of interesting work opportunities and future careers for individuals interested in geriatric care and the importance of a quality of life for our seniors.

In a one-minute pitch, I think Victoria is a lovely place for that kind of thing, a natural location for it, and we do have a centre on aging that could provide the research chops to support that kind of pilot.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Thank you, Dr. McRae.

I have a question for Mr. Snider with the Chamber of Commerce.

My background is in small business. I've been a member of the chamber for almost 30 years. Even as a member of Parliament, I support our local chamber and really appreciate that it remains non-partisan yet represents small business in a very necessary way. It also provides advice to small businesses on how they can connect and provide youth and the next generation with the experience they need.

There was a comment on the budget that came from the president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Perrin Beatty. He said:

> Canadian business asked the government to focus on fundamentals like the growing competitiveness gap, the need to attract more private sector investment and presenting a realistic plan to balance the government's books.

He went on to say:

> The United States is undertaking the most massive tax and regulatory update in generations. Meanwhile, Canadian governments are moving in the opposite direction by increasing costs and adding to the regulatory burden. We urgently need [the] federal [government's] leadership to close that competitiveness gap to prevent the loss of billions of dollars of investment from Canada.

The chamber is also disappointed in the lack of a concrete and responsible plan to balance the budget, and the unrealistic economic expectations it laid out. Mr. Beatty said:

> By adding a further $18.1 billion to the national debt..., the government appears to believe that we can spend our way to prosperity. If Ottawa continues to run up the debt when times are good, we can only speculate on what our national finances will look like next time there is a downturn.

How is this going to affect the future? We have that burden of increasing debt and that lack of competitiveness, and our number one competition is global now, with the Internet and people shopping online. As we become less competitive, what happens to the jobs? Are there more jobs or fewer jobs, or is it static?

● (1705)

Mr. Patrick Snider: The statement largely speaks for itself. The chamber's position is very clear that the key in regard to the government's treatment of business needs to be emphasizing competitiveness. We need to make sure there's long-term fiscal stability, and that in the long run we are able to continue to have a competitive economy compared to our trading partners and the competition around the world. In that sense we'd expect, based on a lot of the long-term estimates, that there might be a negative outcome if we continue with the issues that were identified in that statement.

That's a little outside of my personal area of expertise. I'd direct you to some of the other policy directors at the chamber for a more detailed explanation, but that is a fairly self-evident statement.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

Back over to MP Morrissey, who barely got enough time.

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To follow up on the comments by my colleague, I would just say that the previous government never balanced the books, ran a $150-billion deficit, and created a fake surplus going into an election. They previous government did that on the backs of seniors, I might add, who he was speaking to. Our funding program focuses on social programs to enhance programs such as this particular one.

Putting that aside, I would like to go back to Ms. Fannon to comment on the trend. I was interested, because that really adds some substance to the study we're doing.

Ms. Anne-Marie Fannon: Absolutely. Just to follow on the comments made by our colleague from the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, this notion that there are fewer and fewer direct paths to employment is one that we're really seeing. It doesn't mean our Canadian graduates are not employable, and it doesn't mean they can't find paths into high-quality, high-paying positions, but it means those paths are much more convoluted than they were in the past.

Again, one of the many benefits of work-integrated learning is that opportunity to explore a multitude of careers. A co-op student could have between four and six four-month paid work terms working for different organizations in different industries. They can work for a non-profit, or they can work for a corporation, and so on, and they can really find where their passion is.

When our students who exceed and excel in co-op speak to that, that's exactly what they say, "Co-op allowed me to find my passion." They find an organization that fits with them when they're young, and then they start to morph and grow and develop with that organization. We're really seeing this idea of the development of transferable skills and many paths, but less direct paths, to employment.

● (1710)

Mr. Robert Morrissey: Thank you.

Ms. Gail Bowkett: If I could add one thing to the trends that have already been mentioned, something that we are definitely seeing is an increased interest in entrepreneurship from young people coming through our PSE institutions.

We are also seeing that students who have undertaken a research internship with Mitacs are coming out of those, and sometimes very unexpectedly, with an interest in starting their own business. Now that they've had some of this real-world experience, they think, "Wait a second, I have this great idea," or, "I've done this research and I have something that I think is commercializable. Maybe I can eventually start a company."

We are starting to see that as a path or an outcome into the labour market that maybe has grown over the last several years.

Ms. Judene Pretti: I would say, to follow up on Gail's comment, that's exactly the trend we've seen at Waterloo with respect to entrepreneurship.

We've been talking about ways to better support students in the academic programming, but we've also designed programs such that students can, during their work term, work with a mentor and develop their business idea as their co-op work term.

I had a conversation once with a graduating student who was about to embark on his new company as he graduated. I said, "What's the connection here? Help me understand why we have so many students who go on to start their own company. What is the connection with co-op?" His comment was that to successfully start your own company, you need some experience in business, and by providing that experience through work terms during their 18-year-old to typically 23-year-old range they're then ready to launch right at the age of 24 sometimes, which is before they maybe get caught up in the rest of life and they have to take less risk with respect to what their career is going to look like.

I thought that was a really interesting potential for why the value of this early work-integrated learning might connect to an increase in entrepreneurship.

Mr. Ramesh Sangha (Brampton Centre, Lib.): I'm going with the same question. Have you found out why that interest is there to get into entrepreneurship?

Ms. Judene Pretti: I think there are quite a number of reasons, and that it's a research project waiting to happen, but one is Waterloo attracts it based on the reputation of the institution. I think that exposing students to problems in the workplace, where they have the opportunity to see what's happening and they come up with ideas of problems they could solve, is one.

I think exposing them to peer groups who are thinking about the same kinds of things as they work through the courses is also a contributing factor to it.

The Chair: We will go to MP Falk, please, for five minutes.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk (Battlefords—Lloydminster, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for being here today.

Typically, students would apply for co-op programs. Is that correct? How are they advertised? Are they advertised just online or —

Ms. Kristine Dawson: If I could speak to that question, there are different models of co-operative education programs that different institutions offer. For example, at Conestoga College, my institution, some of our programs are mandatory co-op, meaning when a student applies to that particular academic program, they must successfully complete those co-op work terms in order to complete the credential.

Other programs are what we coin optional co-op programs. That means they might enter in a non co-op stream, and then at some point they apply, and often, based on academic performance, if they are eligible they enter a co-op stream, and then they participate in co-op work terms in that co-op stream.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: If a student enters a co-op program, they would for sure have placement, so to say.

Ms. Kristine Dawson: I'd like to say that co-ops mimic the labour market in that there is a competitive aspect to the job search.

Students apply for jobs. They have agency, in that they can choose which positions suit their maybe desired career goals, but they do have to compete for those. They're interviewing. Employers are selecting them. In the end, the student decides to accept or decline an offer. With that, student engagement in the job search process certainly does play a role. There are times when students won't complete work terms, but I think most co-op institutions have resources in place to support the students to help ensure success wherever possible.

● (1715)

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Okay.

That is what I want to understand, because there are many programs, degrees, or certificates that have practicum placements. With my degree, that's what I had to do. I found it very difficult. I had to find the placement, and the placement was unpaid.

Also, then, there is the bureaucracy within that. I am a social worker, so where do you go for that? To a non-profit? We see a lot of students who go into a non-profit and are actually not practising. They're not learning the skills they need to go out and to all of a sudden be given a caseload or to be going into social services to start apprehending children. They aren't given the opportunity to actually practise the skills to do that.

I'm just wondering about it. What are some ideas to approach that situation, especially with social work? I believe that it's such a valuable profession. There are so many different branches within it, and they can work in so many different areas. What could we do to make it easier, for example, for social workers to find a placement, let alone a paid placement?

Ms. Kristine Dawson: If I could speak to that as well, I think one of the proposals that we were recommending was financial support for not-for-profit and community organizations. That's one of the challenges. We see that historically there are certain industries that typically are familiar with paid student employment and paid co-op work terms, and then there are others that traditionally do not pay their students.

I think this is where support to create systemic change, in the expectation that all students providing productive work to an employer should be paid.... That's where I think there could be some leadership provided in making that systemic change.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: Thank you.

For my next question, I want to follow up on Madam Fortier's question regarding rural and urban areas. What was your statistic with the territories?

Ms. Kristine Dawson: There were 1,590 work terms during the period we were reporting on.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: How many of those students actually come from urban areas and are urban students? It is somewhat disadvantaging to the people who actually live in the rural areas.

I'm just wondering if you have statistics on that.

Ms. Kristine Dawson: We don't have them readily available, but that is something we could follow up on with the committee to see if that's available in our statistics database.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: If you don't mind, that would be great.

I have one quick question for the chamber. What types of programs or incentives does the chamber believe would help with small and medium-sized businesses to encourage the hiring of students?

The Chair: A brief answer, please.

Mr. Patrick Snider: I think the short answer is the most accessible ones possible. The ones that have a very long lead time or have detailed application forms are the ones that create the most barriers.

Simpler is better, such as things that are a simple claim tax credit, something that operates within the existing files that they need to submit. Anything that streamlines the process and reduces the burden of paperwork around the process is ideal.

Mrs. Rosemarie Falk: That's perfect. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

MP Sansoucy, you have three minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

Monday, I visited an enterprise, and this is what the owners said to me. They are in a cutting-edge sector and have clients from all over the world. They had to set up their own training centre, because the university graduates that they hire are one or two years behind as regards their leading research.

That same day, the newspaper *Les affaires*, quoted an interview with the CEO of the Royal Bank of Canada:

> In ten years, at least 50% of jobs will require different skills than today's, said Mr. McKay, who quoted a study on the subject published by the RBC in March. In order to adapt, all workers will not necessarily believe to be coders, but will instead have to depend on "essential" human skills, he feels. Among the skills of the future are social perceptiveness and critical thinking, for instance.

Basically, he was asking for a stronger link between universities and enterprises, and he urged enterprises to hire employees who have less experience, and to provide placements.

I've given you the business point of view. In your opinion, how do universities see these positions taken by entrepreneurs?

● (1720)

[*English*]

Ms. Judene Pretti: I would say that one of the things we see as a benefit of the alternating model of co-op, where students are in academic terms followed by work terms, is that they have the opportunity to do that, to see what's happening in the real world, so to speak, and then to come back into the classroom and connect that. Sometimes it means that they're challenging their professors with respect to what they see actually happening. I think that's one of the beauties of the model of alternating between school and work.

The other thing I would say is that for our employers, even in small and medium-sized businesses, who figure out the process of transitioning projects and roles from one student to the next—because typically they're hiring students year-round, not just during a summer term—it gives them the opportunity to create that stream of pass hand-offs. Usually our co-op students are creating manuals that the next students can pick up and run with.

There are lots of techniques that all of our schools can share with employers to help lower the burden of taking on students.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Brigitte Sansoucy: Thank you.

I would simply like a clarification.

Ms. Dawson, you spoke about Canada Summer Jobs. There has indeed been an increase in the budget. However, for this summer, the number of weeks has been reduced.

Did I hear you say that in your opinion an eight-week job with Canada Summer Jobs is not sufficient?

[*English*]

Ms. Kristine Dawson: Yes. The eight-week length of time for a summer job might be ideal for a high school student or someone who is transitioning from high school to post-secondary, but most post-secondary breaks between the fall-winter semester and the subsequent fall semester are 16 weeks.

The typical length of a co-op work term is 16 weeks. What we sometimes find with the Canada summer jobs program is that employers will only be funded for eight weeks, so students will have to search for work either beforehand or after. Or they'll sometimes have to work unpaid for that employer for the weeks leading up to when the payment occurs so the work term can count.

Typically, co-op programs require work terms to be at least 12 weeks long in order for a student to earn academic credit. That eight-week funding length creates barriers for organizations that really struggle to have the funds to employ a student for the full summer.

The Chair: Thank you very much. That brings us to the end of the second round of questions.

I'd like to remind our members of future business.

On May 23, it will be the main estimates. We'll be joined by all three ministers for that time. On May 28, we're going to be working on the Bill C-62 clause-by-clause for the first hour. For the second hour, it will be volunteerism and witnesses in continuing this study. On May 30, we are going to hear from witnesses around entrepreneurship.

First of all, I want to say thank you to all of the witnesses here today. I've seen this on the calendar for a little while and I've been looking forward to it. I really do appreciate all of you being here today and contributing to this study.

Dr. McRae, I look forward to welcoming you to the Waterloo region and wish you the best of luck in your role.

Thank you very much, everybody.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Chair, I have a question before we adjourn.

Is the meeting on the 23rd going to be televised?

The Chair: Yes, of course.

Mr. Mark Warawa: That's good.

On the motion from the NDP to adjourn debate, when are we going to be dealing with that?

The Chair: We can discuss that in business when we want to bring that forward.

It's up to the mover. That's not up to me. Or it's up to the committee, I should say.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Can we discuss it now?

The Chair: Sure. We are going to be out of time here shortly, but —

Mr. Mark Warawa: We have seven minutes.

The Chair: It was adjourned for today, so I don't think we can bring it back today.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Okay. So I—

Mr. Wayne Long: On a point of order, Chair, if we adjourned debate on that, can we bring that up on the same day?

● (1725)

The Chair: No. That's what I'm getting at. We can discuss it at a future meeting.

Mr. Mark Warawa: Would it be at an open meeting or a closed meeting?

The Chair: That's up to the members—up to the committee, I should say. Okay?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you. The meeting is adjourned.

Published under the authority of the Speaker of the House of Commons

SPEAKER'S PERMISSION

The proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees are hereby made available to provide greater public access. The parliamentary privilege of the House of Commons to control the publication and broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees is nonetheless reserved. All copyrights therein are also reserved.

Reproduction of the proceedings of the House of Commons and its Committees, in whole or in part and in any medium, is hereby permitted provided that the reproduction is accurate and is not presented as official. This permission does not extend to reproduction, distribution or use for commercial purpose of financial gain. Reproduction or use outside this permission or without authorization may be treated as copyright infringement in accordance with the *Copyright Act*. Authorization may be obtained on written application to the Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons.

Reproduction in accordance with this permission does not constitute publication under the authority of the House of Commons. The absolute privilege that applies to the proceedings of the House of Commons does not extend to these permitted reproductions. Where a reproduction includes briefs to a Committee of the House of Commons, authorization for reproduction may be required from the authors in accordance with the *Copyright Act*.

Nothing in this permission abrogates or derogates from the privileges, powers, immunities and rights of the House of Commons and its Committees. For greater certainty, this permission does not affect the prohibition against impeaching or questioning the proceedings of the House of Commons in courts or otherwise. The House of Commons retains the right and privilege to find users in contempt of Parliament if a reproduction or use is not in accordance with this permission.

Also available on the House of Commons website at the following address: http://www.ourcommons.ca

Publié en conformité de l'autorité du Président de la Chambre des communes

PERMISSION DU PRÉSIDENT

Les délibérations de la Chambre des communes et de ses comités sont mises à la disposition du public pour mieux le renseigner. La Chambre conserve néanmoins son privilège parlementaire de contrôler la publication et la diffusion des délibérations et elle possède tous les droits d'auteur sur celles-ci.

Il est permis de reproduire les délibérations de la Chambre et de ses comités, en tout ou en partie, sur n'importe quel support, pourvu que la reproduction soit exacte et qu'elle ne soit pas présentée comme version officielle. Il n'est toutefois pas permis de reproduire, de distribuer ou d'utiliser les délibérations à des fins commerciales visant la réalisation d'un profit financier. Toute reproduction ou utilisation non permise ou non formellement autorisée peut être considérée comme une violation du droit d'auteur aux termes de la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*. Une autorisation formelle peut être obtenue sur présentation d'une demande écrite au Bureau du Président de la Chambre.

La reproduction conforme à la présente permission ne constitue pas une publication sous l'autorité de la Chambre. Le privilège absolu qui s'applique aux délibérations de la Chambre ne s'étend pas aux reproductions permises. Lorsqu'une reproduction comprend des mémoires présentés à un comité de la Chambre, il peut être nécessaire d'obtenir de leurs auteurs l'autorisation de les reproduire, conformément à la *Loi sur le droit d'auteur*.

La présente permission ne porte pas atteinte aux privilèges, pouvoirs, immunités et droits de la Chambre et de ses comités. Il est entendu que cette permission ne touche pas l'interdiction de contester ou de mettre en cause les délibérations de la Chambre devant les tribunaux ou autrement. La Chambre conserve le droit et le privilège de déclarer l'utilisateur coupable d'outrage au Parlement lorsque la reproduction ou l'utilisation n'est pas conforme à la présente permission.

Aussi disponible sur le site Web de la Chambre des communes à l'adresse suivante : http://www.noscommunes.ca